

Table 1. Why poinsettias fail to last in the home environment.	
Symptoms	Possible Cause(s)
Lower leaves turning yellow and dropping; roots appear white and healthy	1. Inadequate watering 2. Low light conditions 3. Plants were boxed or sleeved too long (Epinasty)
Lower leaves turning yellow and dropping; roots discolored	1. Root rot caused by overwatering or allowing water to remain in the saucer
Small, round cyathia (true flowers) in the center of the bracts drop	1. Low light conditions 2. Aged plants 3. Cultivar with few cyathia
Bracts fade in color	1. The plant has aged 2. Temperatures too warm (>75° F) 3. Low light conditions
Bracts with blue or white discoloration	1. Chilling injury. Plants exposed to <50° F

which collects in the saucer. Poinsettias cannot tolerate drying out, which can cause premature leaf drop. Drought is the most common reason that poinsettias fail to last. If the plant has been in your home for over 30 days, a half strength fertilizer solution should be applied monthly.

Temperature

The optimal daytime temperatures for maintaining poinsettia quality is 70° to 75°F. Avoid temperatures above 75°F because this will cause premature bract fading and leaf drop. Lowering the night temperatures to 60° to 65°F helps to maintain bract coloration. Avoid temperatures below 55°F because this will result in chilling injury. Also avoid placing the plants in cold, drafty locations, by heating vents, or on top of appliances.

Light

Place the plant in a well lighted area of the house to maintain good bract color and avoid leaf drop. Plants can be placed in direct sunlight (south, east, or west exposure), but a sunny location increases the water demands of the plant. Avoid letting the plant touch cold windowpanes because chilling injury can occur.

Reflowering

If desired poinsettias can be *reflowered*. Although it may be easier to compost your plant and purchase a new one the following Christmas. If you plan to keep a poinsettia plant, care for it as you would any houseplant. Place it in a sunny location, water as needed, and

apply a half strength fertilizer solution monthly.

After the last chance of frost has past, cut back the stems to 3 to 4 inches to promote new growth. Repot the plant in a slightly larger container. If more than one plant was in the original container, separate each plant into its own individual pot. Water the plants thoroughly after replanting. Initially place the plant outdoors in a semi-sunny location for 2 weeks so it can become acclimated to the higher light conditions before moving it into full sun. Fertilize the plant with a complete-analysis, water soluble fertilizer (such as 20-10-20) every 2 weeks. Pinch the plant back to 2 or 3 leaves per shoot if it becomes too large. Prune out extra shoots if the canopy is too crowded. Move the plant indoors before the weather turns cool in the fall (night temperatures below 60°F).

Long nights (short days) promotes flowering of poinsettias. Starting the last week of September or the first week of October, provide the plant with at least 13 hours of *uninterrupted darkness*. Exposing the plant to any light (car lights, turning on the room light, etc.) during the night's darkness period will cause a delay in flowering. In general, interrupting the darkness will add an additional day before the plant flowers. Plants can be placed in a closet, box, or limited-